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Letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you herewith a concept paper for the Security Council open debate on "Children and armed conflict", which is to be held on 17 July 2008 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and the attached concept paper could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Le Luong **Minh**
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Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

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Annex to the letter dated 7 July 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper for the Security Council open debate on "Children and armed conflict": 17 July 2008

Recognizing the need to further strengthen the commitment of the Security Council and the United Nations at large to the issue of children affected by armed conflict, the Vietnamese Presidency of the Security Council will hold an open debate focused on the issue of children and armed conflict, especially the ways and means by which the international community as a whole can contribute to achieving long-term and sustained solutions to the issue.

The situation of children affected by armed conflict has been a focus of the Security Council since the adoption of Council resolution 1261 (1999), its first resolution on children and armed conflict. Since that time, the Council has demonstrated its resolve on this issue through the adoption of five other thematic resolutions, namely resolutions 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

The engagement of the Security Council has translated into some tangible results. Four formal action plans to identify and release children from fighting forces and to prevent further recruitment have been agreed to by parties to conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report. In one situation alone, such action plans have already translated into the release of some 1,400 children associated with armed groups, which have now been de-listed from the annexes to the said annual report. Elsewhere, formal and informal agreements with parties to conflict are in place and are expected to turn into formal action plans in the coming months. In addition, specific provisions relating to children have been more systematically included in peace processes and agreements, providing, among other things, for the reintegration of children into their communities. United Nations peacekeeping mandates are also more systematically incorporating child protection provisions through the inclusion of child protection adviser posts in nine peacekeeping and political missions.

The Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict conducts regular reviews of country reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and makes relevant recommendations to the Council. The Working Group has reviewed 18 such reports to date and has issued 13 sets of conclusions and recommendations on this basis.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict, in her capacity as an independent moral voice for children, has undertaken 12 country visits over the last 18 months. These missions have facilitated better coordination among United Nations partners, the promotion of regional and international cooperation, collaboration with Governments and dialogue with parties to conflict to elicit concrete child protection commitments.

Against the backdrop of deeper Security Council and system-wide engagement and some elements of progress, the overall situation for children in situations of armed conflict continues to be a serious concern. The seventh annual report of the

Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/62/609-S/2007/757) reviews developments in situations of concern and offers a series of recommendations to the Council.

At the last open debate on children and armed conflict on 12 February 2008, the Security Council discussed the above report and adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/6) which outlined a number of important considerations in moving the agenda forward. The Council also requested that the next report of the Secretary-General be submitted by May 2009.

It is noteworthy that, while largely focused on a peace and security perspective and a rights-based approach, in the views of many Member States, the United Nations should more adequately address the development approach to the issue of children and armed conflict.

In its last presidential statement, the Security Council stressed the need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights. It further recognized that a stronger focus is required on the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, and in this regard invited all parties concerned to enhance their exchange of information about programmes and best practices and to ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to support national strategies or action plans in the area of child protection and welfare, including community-based programmes, with a view to ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of their programmatic response to the release, rehabilitation and reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

Such a development approach can contribute to a long-term and sustained solution to the issue of children and armed conflict.

Member States and other stakeholders are invited to express their views on how the Security Council, the United Nations as a whole and the international community at large can better deliver on the issue of children and armed conflict, including through strengthened focus on, inter alia, the development approach and other aspects contained in the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General (A/62/609-S/2007/757) and the presidential statement of 12 February 2008 (S/PRST/2008/6). In addition, Member States may also wish to refer to the annual report on the activities of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, which is scheduled to be issued in early July.